NORTHERN 'IRAQ AND ITS PEOPLES

By MAJOR W. C. F. WILSON, O.B.E.

114 A lecture given before the Society on March 10, 1937, Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes, K.C.I.E., in the Chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have much pleasure in introducing Major Wilson, who is going to speak to us on the subject of Northern 'Iraq and its peoples. He first served in 'Iraq under that very great officer, Sir Percy Cox, who recently passed away. Major Wilson rebuilt Kut after our victory over the Turks, and of recent years he has been administrative officer at Mosul; and can give us very up-to-date accounts of the Assyrian problem in Northern 'Iraq, and can also speak from first-hand knowledge of the Kurds and the other minorities of the country.

101 TOO many who have never been to 'Iraq, the name, or its old alternative, Mesopotamia, possibly conjures up visions of flat, featureless plains, strips of cultivation along the banks of the two great rivers, Tigris and Euphrates, sandstorms and a torrid climate. Such visions are in a fair measure true of central and southern 'Iraq, but are very far from applying to the two northern provinces of Arbil and Mosul.

Geography

133 From the Lesser Zab river northwards the country is undulating and intersected with watercourses or wādis, which after rain flow down to the Tigris and its half-dozen tributaries. This type of country extends right up to the foothills which fringe the mighty mountain mass of Kurdistan. Over this area, irrigation, except on the rivers for summer crops, is unnecessary, and the rainfall which comes between November and May is in most years sufficient for the cultivation of large crops of wheat and barley. In the spring, grazing for animals is plentiful and a wonderful assortment of wild flowers appear.

In the mountains, during the same period, heavy rain and snow fill the underground sources and provide water for the summer growing of rice, tobacco and other crops, and for good summer grazing for animals. These mountains contain several ranges 6,000 to 8,000 feet high and one peak near the Iranian frontier over 10,000 feet.

Population

144 The inhabitants of the two provinces consist of an extraordinarily heterogeneous collection of creeds and races with all the problems produced by such a collection.

4a Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MHI Iraq MHI
Iraq Bedouin MHI

1 The population of Mosul and Arbil provinces exceeds 630,000, of
162 which 530,000 are Muslims. Of these Muslims, all but 10,000 are Sunnis. There are 60,000 Christians, 32,000 Yezidis and 10,000 Jews. The minorities therefore total only one-fifth of the whole. The Muslims consist of Arabs and Kurds in approximately equal parts, together with some 16,000 Turkomans.

I Mosul itself is mainly an Arab town with a population of 100,000.
[162] It is a great entrepôt for trade in sheep, cattle, wool, grain, hides,
438 intestines, galls and eggs with the thickly populated districts round
439 and also with Syria and Turkey. Its importance in this respect will
496 certainly increase when at long last it is linked by rail with the Syrian frontier at Tel Kuchik and with Baghdad via Baa'iji. Work on this linking is now proceeding, and it is interesting to remember that when it is completed in a couple of years it will form the last stage in the famous Baghdad-Berlin Railway which was the Kaiser's fondest dream. The circumstances under which it will be completed are likely, however, to be very different to those which he visualized.

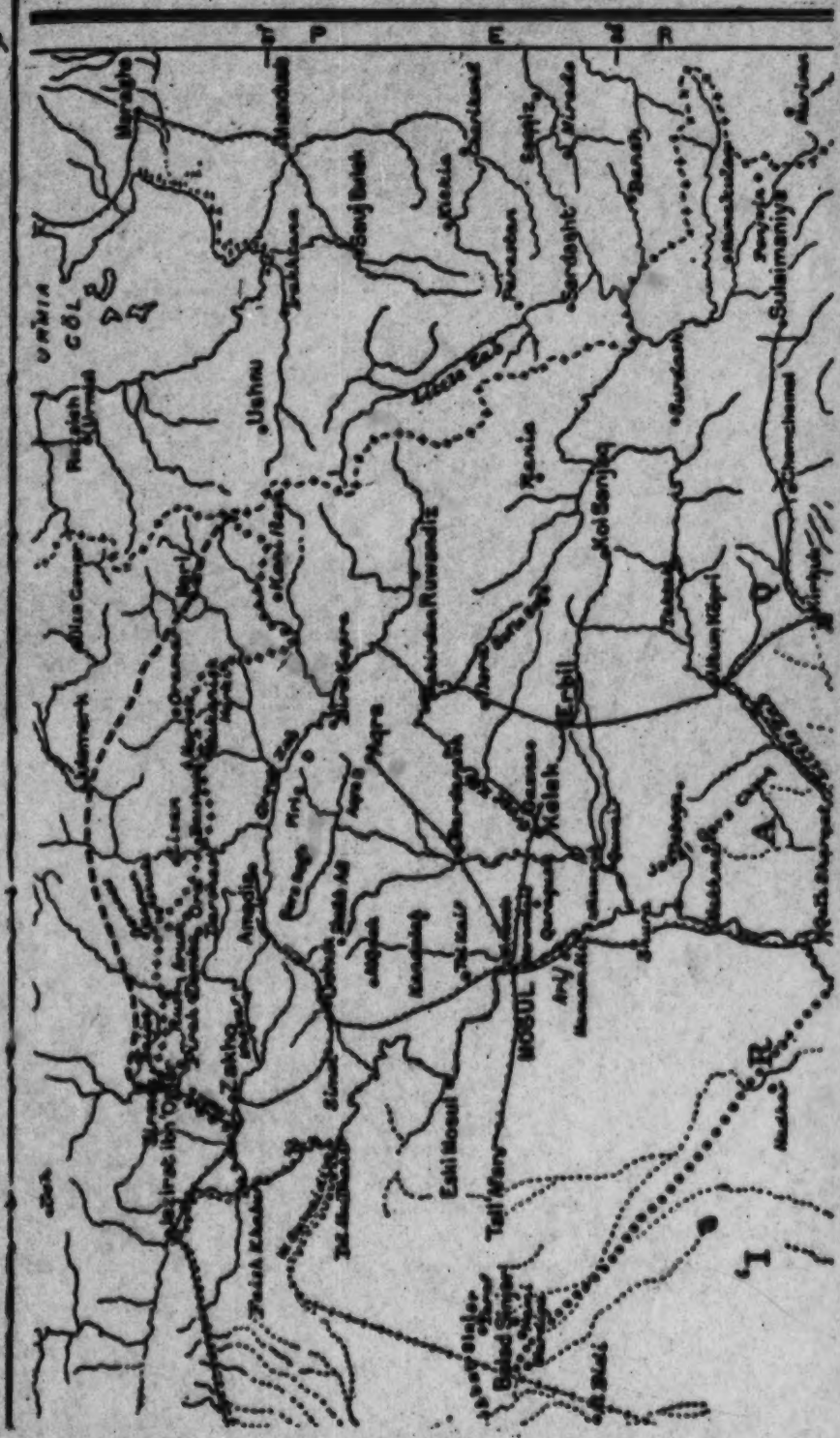
Arabs

I Apart from forming the majority of the inhabitants of Mosul itself,
8 Arabs are found as cultivators on the Tigris both north and south of
101 the town and to the south of the Jebal Sinjar (Sinjar mountain) and as bedouin who range the uncultivated areas to the south-west, west and north-west.

8 The bedouin consist of more than one tribe, but by far the most
619 important is the Shammar. This great tribe is of Arabian origin and
221 has in the past been pushed steadily northwards by economic forces
721 and the search for new grazing grounds. With the great improve-
233 ment in public security during recent years, cultivation has extended further and further from the towns and villages and encroached on the haunts of the Shammar. Formerly the means of livelihood of these bedouin were varied if not all respectable. They included the raiding of the flocks and herds of their weaker neighbours and the extortion of "khuwa" or safe-conduct money from merchants, travellers and others. At the same time they made a perfectly legitimate living from acting as shepherds for the flocks of townsmen and by breeding and selling camels. Nowadays raiding and safe-conduct money have been abolished and motor transport has to a great extent ousted the camel as a carrier in 'Iraq and the neighbouring countries and caused a severe slump in the camel market.

4: Wilson G-2 (no data) 1927 MHI Iraq MHI

102



p. 389

4c Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MHI Iraq MHI
Iraq Bedouin MHI
Kurd MAH

B 619 558 178 461 a severe slump in the camel market. Slowly and very reluctantly the bedouin are turning to cultivation and feel themselves immeasurably lowered in the process. Strangely enough, they are also to be found in greasy overalls, working on the rigs of the Mosul Oil Companies. In this work they do not lose caste as they do if they become cultivators.

B 6aa Shaikh Ajil al Yawar is the paramount Shaikh of the 'Iraqi Shammar. He is an outstanding personality possessing a fine presence and a wonderful charm of manner. With singular astuteness he has managed to control his tribesmen, keep on the right side of successive governments and at the same time amass a considerable fortune for himself. During recent years his figure has perhaps suffered somewhat from the use of motor-cars instead of riding a fiery Arab steed or liver-shaking "dhillool" (trotting camel).

Turkomans

I 173 162 Leaving the Arabs, we come to the Turkomans. They are the remnants of ancient immigration and are to be found in Tel Affar town between Mosul and Sinjar and in a string of villages across to Altun Keupri and Kirkuk. Arbil is also largely a Turkoman town. The village of Nainawa, the ancient Nineveh, just across the Tigris from Mosul, is Turkoman. In a mosque built on unexcavated Assyrian remains it contains the reputed tomb of the prophet Jonah. The mosque is also said to contain a portion of the vertebræ of the whale!

Kurds

I 162 K 101 144 619 Next we come to the Kurds, who form by far the majority of the population of the mountain areas and who are also to be found in a large number of villages well south of the mountains. The Kurds are Aryan in origin and Sunni Muslims by religion. The mountain Kurds and in fact all the mountaineers of Kurdistan bear a close resemblance to the Scottish clans of two hundred years ago. They are still organ-

K 6a2 657 644 276 619 ooo ized on a tribal or clan basis, though the increase in government control and influence is naturally tending to destroy this organization and undermine the power of the chiefs, or Aghas as they are called. Aghas may, however, still be seen proceeding to town or market with a "tail" of armed henchmen and even a pipebearer. The Kurdish pipebearer is, however, concerned with the Agha's tobacco pipe and not with music. Kurdish music is nevertheless played on a pipe

 K

Kurdish music is nevertheless played on a pipe resembling the chanter of a bagpipe and has often a pleasant lilt. 534 535 Kurdish dancing, however, is by no means as strenuous as Scottish. Kurds and all other mountain dwellers in Kurdistan dance what is known as the chain-dance, similar to that which is, I believe, commonly seen in the Balkans. The dancers join hands and form a ring. The piper and a drummer with a sort of tenor drum stand in the middle, and the dance consists of fairly intricate footwork while the circle moves slowly round. Often star dancers who fancy themselves as budding Nijinskys do solo dances inside the circle. Amongst the [K 563] Kurds the men and women dance separately, but with the Christian sects the two sexes dance together. This does not mean, however, that Kurdish women are completely segregated or kept by themselves. As a matter of fact, they possess considerable freedom and may be seen gathering firewood, tending animals or engaged in other tasks on the mountainside, often far from their villages.

Up to five years ago the Barzan district of Kurdistan retained all K of its savage and primitive features. Government had not penetrated 619 and Shaikh Ahmed, a religious fanatic, was dictator. With the help 643 of his brothers and a standing army of several hundred men he com- 641 pletely dominated the impoverished inhabitants, who had the shaikh's 726 bodyguard perpetually billeted on them and who had to provide them 792 with food, clothing and tobacco and anything else they might fancy. Any protests on the part of the villagers were discouraged by the K strongest methods. Such complete ascendancy did Shaikh Ahmed gain [218] over his savage and illiterate people that they began to look upon him as a god and, though Muslims in name, turned their faces towards him K in prayer rather than towards Mecca, as tradition demands. There 792 was a Mullah in the district called Mullah Juj, who represented himself 779 to be the prophet of this new god. The Mullah was a very fiery and 682 eloquent speaker and, unfortunately for himself, his fame began to 784 surpass even that of the deity. This could not of course be tolerated, 661 and one of Shaikh Ahmed's brothers "bumped off" the presumptuous 671 prophet. Up to that time the Koran had been revered, but now the K Shaikh issued orders for the destruction of all copies to be found. He [136] also withdrew the ban on the eating of pork, for wild pig were plenti- I ful in Barzan. Armed missionaries were sent out beyond the Barzan K bounds, and villages which refused to accept the Shaikh were burned 721 and a number of the male inhabitants put to death. This state of 657 affairs could not be allowed to continue, and the 'Iraq Government 648 was forced to take action in conjunction with the British Royal K Air Force. 697

44 Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MH1 Iraq MH1
Kurd MA11

Air Force. The terrain was exceedingly mountainous and thickly wooded and there were many caves in which to shelter from bombs or machine-gunning from the air. The Shaikh's followers, too, were very hardy and mobile. Without very efficient air action, which aimed at destroying the morale of the Kurds by perpetually harassing them rather than by slaying them, to gain a definite result would have been a very costly affair. As it was the Shaikh and his followers were eventually driven into Turkey and after surrendering to the Turkish authorities were handed over to the 'Iraq Government. It was found that the Shaikh, his brothers and the remnants of the standing army could not fit in with any regular administration, and so they have been settled in small bodies in southern Kurdistan near Sulimani, where they will not be in a position to cause further trouble. The Barzanis have now reverted to the Islamic faith.

Roads

What has really tamed the Kurds is the Government policy of making roads through the mountains, just as General Wade did in Scotland with similar results. Good roads now exist from Arbil, where Alexander the Great defeated King Darius III. in 331 B.C., to the Persian frontier at Rayat and from Dohuq to Amadia. Both these roads represent considerable engineering feats and carry a good volume of traffic. The Rowanduz road was that which a nomadic Kurdish tribe, the Herki, with their 60,000 animals, used on their annual migrations from 'Iraq to their summer grazing grounds in Iran. During recent years difficulties arose between the nomads and the 'Irani Government, and the former now remain in 'Iraq for the summer. It has not been easy to find grazing for them there, as other nomadic tribes had already been forbidden by the Turkish Government to graze in Turkey and had occupied practically all the spare grazing. The 'Iraq Government, too, has been attempting to popularize summer resorts in Kurdistan and so prevent the flow of money to Syria and the Lebanon, where good summer amenities exist. I am afraid, however, that so far this policy has not been very successful. Good summer resorts require the expenditure of much money, and the attempts at providing suitable summer accommodation have, I regret, tended to spoil what was originally beautiful scenery.

The little town of Zakho in western Kurdistan has greatly benefited by the improvement in public security and communications and is

4: Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MHI Iraq MHI
Kurd MA II

I K 438 439 173 782 539

now a flourishing market for the surrounding country and for trade with Turkey. It has one feature of great interest: an ancient bridge of Roman design, known locally as "Alexander's bridge," though unlikely to be in any way connected with the great conqueror. Tradition at Zakho has, however, another tale of the construction of the bridge. It is said to have been built by a celebrated local governor, who found that the keystone would not remain in place. He summoned a soothsayer, who proclaimed that it would never stand until a life had been built into the arch. The governor accepted the verdict and with his councillors, who were sworn to secrecy, decided that the first living thing to follow them on to the bridge the next morning would provide the necessary victim. They waited for some hours, but no one came. Then the governor's little daughter wondered why her father was so long away and taking her pet dog she set off to look for him. Her father was at first terrified when he saw her coming, but was relieved when he noticed that her dog was running in front of her. Alas, she thought it unfitting for the dog to approach her father before she did and so she called it and stepped on to the bridge. Public opinion compelled the governor to carry out the sacrifice and the girl was built into the centre of the arch and the keystone held and has gone on holding for hundreds of years.

I K 653 185

The development of Kurdistan has naturally not been popular with all the Kurds, and I remember an interesting incident. During the construction of the Amadia road, an elderly Agha stood for a while sadly watching the blasting of a pulpit of overhanging rock. When echoes of the explosion had died and the last fragments of stone had fallen into the rocky gorge below, he turned sorrowfully away. "The old days, the old days," he lamented. "Many is the time I lay behind that rock with my rifle and held up caravans for safe-conduct money."

I K 721 361

The town of Amadia, which, like Edinburgh Castle, is situated on a rocky plateau at a height of 4,100 feet, sixteen feet higher than Cairn Gorm, is now easily accessible by road. The town was formerly ruled by semi-independent Pashas who admitted a nominal suzerainty to the Turkish authorities. It has a stormy history, and the minaret of the mosque is pitted with bullet holes. These are souvenirs of 1925, when the Barzan Kurds, in alliance with some of the descendants of the old rulers of Amadia, attacked the town and succeeded in surrounding the Mosuli qaimaqam and a handful of police in the Government serai. The stout-hearted garrison held out until they were rescued by a body of Assyrians under the Assyrian bishop, Mar Sergis, a jovial Friar Tuck of the Nestorian Church.

319

4c Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MH Iraq MH1
Kurd H A II

000 of Assyrians under the Assyrian bishop, Mar Sergis, a jovial Friar Tuck of the Nestorian Church.

K 137 Kurdistan is a beautiful country. It is in the main well wooded, with scrub or stunted oak on the hillsides and poplars, walnuts and mulberries near the villages. Pines grow in two areas only and chinārs (planes) along the streams. Unfortunately, deforestation is proceeding apace, and unless immediate and drastic steps are taken by the 'Iraq Government, heavy soil erosion and a tremendous decrease in grazing facilities will take place. Few new walnut trees are to be found owing to a prevalent superstition that the planter of a walnut tree will die with the appearance of the first nuts. It might be supposed that the oldest inhabitants could be employed in planting, but apparently the grandfathers look askance at this suggestion!

K 181 The Kurds are a virile and cheerful people. They have been called treacherous, and undoubtedly stories can be quoted in support of this accusation. Yet it must be remembered that the annals of our own Scottish highlands are by no means clean in this respect.

K 164 221 342 In the summer the valleys of Kurdistan are, unfortunately, very malarial, and this is fostered by the cultivation of rice with its invariable accompaniment of mosquitoes. During this season most of the flock-owners move to their "zōzāns" or summer sheilings on the mountain tops, where, in shelters of oak branches, they pass the time pleasantly enough.

Christians

I 795 The Christians of the northern provinces are divided into numerous sects, several of which are relics of the old schismatic divisions of the Eastern Communion. They include Chaldeans and Syrian Catholics, who are under the control of Rome, Jacobites, Armenians, Nestorians and Seventh Day Adventists.

I 795 167 563 648 162 Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics and Jacobites are found in Mosul and many villages on the left bank of the Tigris. Chaldeans are also found in the Supna valley near Amadia and in one large village near Arbil. Seventh Day Adventists only flourish in Mosul. Many people in England know something of the Assyrians and their recent history. The Assyrians themselves claim to be descendants of the famous kingdom of Nineveh and are certainly semitic. The term "Assyrian" now includes ex-Ottoman members of the Nestorian Church who were domiciled either within what is now the 'Iraq state or who were ejected from Hakkari by the Turks during the Great War and refused

4s Wilson G-8 (no date) 1937 MH1 Iraq MH1
Yazidis MH 10

I 795 167 648 563 162

readmission afterwards, and also members of other Christian sects belonging to the recognized tribes of Hakkari who accompanied their Nestorian brethren in the War exodus to 'Iraq via Persia. Since the Turks refused to readmit these people and Great Britain, when peace terms were concluded with Turkey, was not in a position to insist, it was necessary to try and find lands for them within the borders of the 'Iraq state. The Assyrians wished to be settled as a homogeneous unit, but this was impossible as it would have meant displacing a large number of Kurds. Many of the Assyrians were settled on such lands as were available, but in 1933 serious trouble broke out between some of these settlers and the 'Iraq Government, and incidents occurred which made it impossible for at any rate all the Assyrians to remain in 'Iraq. Various schemes were examined, including settlement in Brazil, British Guiana and on the Orontes in Syria. None of these, however, proved practicable, and the matter is still in the hands of the Council of the League of Nations. In the meantime 6,000 Assyrians have been settled temporarily on the River Khabur in eastern Syria, and the remainder, numbering some 20,000, are still in 'Iraq. Those in Syria include several complete tribes. The condition of those in 'Iraq may be said to be satisfactory at present and they possess very large numbers of animals of all kinds. Many are also employed as mechanics, clerks, etc., by the big oil companies and in the 'Iraq railways and police. All these possess 'Iraqi nationality. A certain number are also employed as aerodrome guards by the British Royal Air Force, duties which are shared by them with Arabs and Kurds. The Assyrians are a brave, hardy race, though obstinate as isolated, uneducated mountaineers are liable to be. It is indeed a tragedy that they should have been caught up in the wheel of events and severely mangled in the process.

[I 463]

I 147

The Yezidis

Y 101 776 779 871 771

The Yezidis are usually known as "devil-worshippers." This is, however, a misnomer. "Devil-propitiators" would be more correct. They believe that Satan, whom they call Mālik Tāūs or the Peacock Angel, was exiled from Heaven for a definite period and is, after the lapse of a few thousand years, to be restored to high favour. It is incumbent on them therefore to keep on the right side of him, so that he may then use his influence on their behalf. It is extremely difficult to investigate the Yezidi religion. The priests teach that education, save for their caste, is forbidden by the "Black Books," the Yezidi

4a Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MHI Iraq
Yazidis MH 10

Y 101 776 779 871 771 scriptures, which are reputed to be concealed in a place known only to the highest religious authorities of the sect. Most Yezidis are therefore illiterate and appear to know very little about their religion. It is uncertain, however, whether this is due to ignorance of their religion or to secretiveness resulting from past persecution. The religion is certainly a queer jumble of tenets taken from Christianity, Islam and from pagan survivals.

Y 778 Shaikh Ādi, the central shrine of the sect, forty miles north-east of Mosul, is situated at the head of a wooded valley in the mountains fringing the plains. A pleasant stream runs from the shrine. Yezidis maintain that this stream is connected underground with the sacred stream Zem-Zem at Mecca!

The shrine itself is adorned with graceful white fluted cones, and close by stand several similar smaller shrines, including one to Shaikh Shems, the Sun.

The origin of the Shaikh Ādi is unknown. The building has been claimed as Muslim, but is more probably Christian. The interior certainly resembles an ancient Nestorian church rather than a mosque. By the side of the door is a large black stone snake, which is kissed by the devout. Visitors take off their shoes and are careful not to step on the threshold, as this apparently angers Mālik Tāūs. The tomb itself is covered with a rather disreputable cloth. In an adjacent room are huge jars reminiscent of "The Forty Thieves," holding oil presented by faithful Yezidis, and used for the small earthenware lamps which twinkle in myriads during festivals. In the courtyard is a stone trough which receives water from the sacred stream and which contains numbers of curious black and white spotted newts.

Y [825]

Y 778 793 The hereditary attendants at the shrine are known as Faqirs. They always wear black and are perhaps a relic of monks who lived at Shaikh Ādi before the advent of the Yezidi religion. The religious head is the *Mir*, a debauched degenerate, largely under the influence of his strong-minded mother. Formerly *Mirs* enjoyed considerable power, though it must be admitted that the appointment lacked security of tenure as the seven Mirs previous to the present incumbent were all murdered.

Y [682]

Y 794 The revenues for the upkeep of the shrine and the emoluments of the *Mir* are collected from the people by the "Qowwāls," who tour twice yearly with the sacred brass peacocks, emblems of Mālik Tāūs. All Yezidis visit these emblems and make suitable contributions and so ensure their health and prosperity until the next tour.

Y 788

4: Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MH1 Iraq MH1
Yazidis MH 10

The Yezidis in 'Iraq practically all dwell either in the Sinjār or Shaikhān districts. Each of these districts has a brass peacock and that belonging to Shaikhān must never cross the Tigris. If it did so the world would come to an end! Non-Yezidis cannot view the peacocks or the other sacred emblems, which include the "shema'dan" or candlestick and the "bairaqs" or banners. When not touring, all emblems are kept at the residence of the *Mir* at Baa'dhra in Shaikhān, though a few years ago the Sinjār Yezidis, who were at variance with the *Mir*, seized their peacock and collected subscriptions on their account until compelled by Government to return it to its lawful keeper. Yezidis object strongly to the use of the word "Shaitān" (Satan) or any word resembling it. Terms meaning "curse" are also never used less Satan construes them as a tactless reminder of his fall.

Owing to these difficulties and restrictions, Yezidis are not "good mixers" and rarely enter Government service. A few were formerly employed by the British Government in the transport company of the 'Iraq Levies, but did not prove very satisfactory. Occasionally they have enlisted in the 'Iraq army, but an attempt to apply a light measure of conscription to the Sinjār Yezidis resulted in an armed revolt by five villages. This necessitated punitive action with, unfortunately, heavy casualties on both sides. The Yezidis speak a form of Kurdish, but many also know Arabic. Ain Sifni or Ain-i-Safina (Spring of the Boat) is the chief market town of the Shaikhān Yezidis. It derives its name from a tradition that the Ark touched ground there.

Yezidis are to be found outside 'Iraq in the Caucasus and also a few thousand north of Aleppo.

It is difficult to believe that this curious religion can long survive in 'Iraq under present-day conditions. The *Mir* is unpopular and there is no better successor amongst his in-bred and degenerate relatives. The Yezidis have recently refused to yield him many of his former rights and have severely criticised his squandering of the religious revenues. Most of the members of the hierarchy have concentrated their energies on trying to divert funds to their own pockets and have quarrelled furiously. A certain number of stalwarts have defied the priests and attended schools. In the Sinjār prior to the Great War religious pressure induced a considerable number of Yezidis to adopt Islam, and it is within the bounds of possibility that ere long there may be a regular landslide to either the Christian or Islamic faith or both.

4. Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MH1 Iraq MH1
Levantine Jews MF1

Jews

J 174 The Jews in 'Iraq are said to be the descendants of those taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and brought to Babylon, where they were employed on the rebuilding of that city and on the upkeep of the canals on which its wealth depended.

J 871 176 784 403 In Mosul till recently the Jewish standard of education was lamentably low and their religious observances entirely out of keeping with those of modern Jewry. Even there, however, an astute Jewish brain invented an instrument controlled by clockwork to turn on and off electric switches at fixed hours and so avoid the sin of making fire on the Sabbath.

J 871 The very generous Jewish philanthropist Sir Elly Khaduri, has in recent years provided funds to build excellent schools for the community, and it is hoped that a great improvement in the education of the Jewish children will result.

I 162 563 J 286 101 142 463 J 101 463 631 In Kurdistan, Jews of whom many are weavers are found in all the small towns and also in many otherwise purely Kurdish villages, where they live in perfect amity with their Muslim neighbours. In dress they are practically indistinguishable from the Kurds but easily recognizable by their facial features. In the most remote mountain areas Jewish villages exist the inhabitants of which are cultivators and possess vineyards and orchards. The reason for the survival of these villages in the lawless past is that they and their inhabitants were the property of powerful Kurdish Aghas who were strong to protect their serfs as they would have protected their sheep, cattle or mules. Throughout Kurdistan the ubiquitous itinerant Jewish pedlar may be met who, quite unarmed, is surprisingly immune from molestation.

J 181 186 I 182 The Jews of northern 'Iraq are not at all interested in Zionism and form a very useful, law-abiding, hard-working section of the population.

I 563 657 It is difficult, if not impossible, within the compass of a short lecture, to give an adequate description of the curious elements who make up the attractive mosaic of northern 'Iraq. In the not very distant past the 'Iraq Government has incurred, and rightly incurred, strong criticism of its treatment of some of the peoples who go to make up this mosaic. It should be realized, however, that the administration of the Mosul and Arbil provinces and the solution of the diverse and difficult problems they present is a matter which might well test the skill and patience of any government, even if far more experienced than that of the new state of 'Iraq.

4: Wilson G-3 (no date) 1937 MH1 Iraq MH1

DISCUSSION

Mrs. Soane-Ellis: Might I ask if the lecturer has any information as to the whereabouts of Sheikh Mahmud? The last time I saw him he was a prisoner at Ramadi. 000

Major Wilson: I cannot say whether he is exactly a prisoner now, but he certainly would not be allowed to go back to Sulaimaniyyeh.

Brigadier J. G. Browne: May I ask what is the position of the Pizhder Kurds under the present Government? 657 563

Major Wilson: There has been a slight extension of police control, but, as far as I know, real administration has not yet been established over the Pizhder.

The Chairman: It remains, I think, only for me to sum up what we have learnt. We see here again the extraordinary importance of the question of roads in establishing the authority of the Government among mountain peoples. We are building roads on the North-West Frontier of India. And here we have seen the roads that are being built through Kurdistan, like Mr. Hamilton's very fine achievement, the making of the road through the Rowanduz Gorge. I believe the account of the building of that road is going to be published shortly, and it should make a book well worth reading. 653 657

We have seen some extraordinarily interesting slides. And we have learnt some valuable information about the present position of the Assyrians. From what the lecturer says, the best plan now would appear to be rather to leave them alone where they are. The other plan was to have been to move them to an extremely suitable site on the Orontes River. But unfortunately the lands chosen had been sequestrated from their original owner, who had been in trouble. When M. Blum came into office, he decided he could deal with this case, reinstated the man in question, and restored his lands. So that scheme necessarily came to nothing, and it is quite impossible on other grounds now for the Assyrians to go there. But one gathers that it is wisest not to agitate on their behalf, nor to stir them up, for that only makes them very unpopular in the country. They are finding employment to some extent in the oil-fields, and as guards and station masters on the railways and in similar employment, and one can hope things may settle down and that they will stay in their own country. 186 463

We must thank our lecturer, not only for the good work he has obviously done in 'Iraq, but also for the excellent and informative lecture he has given us this evening. 000